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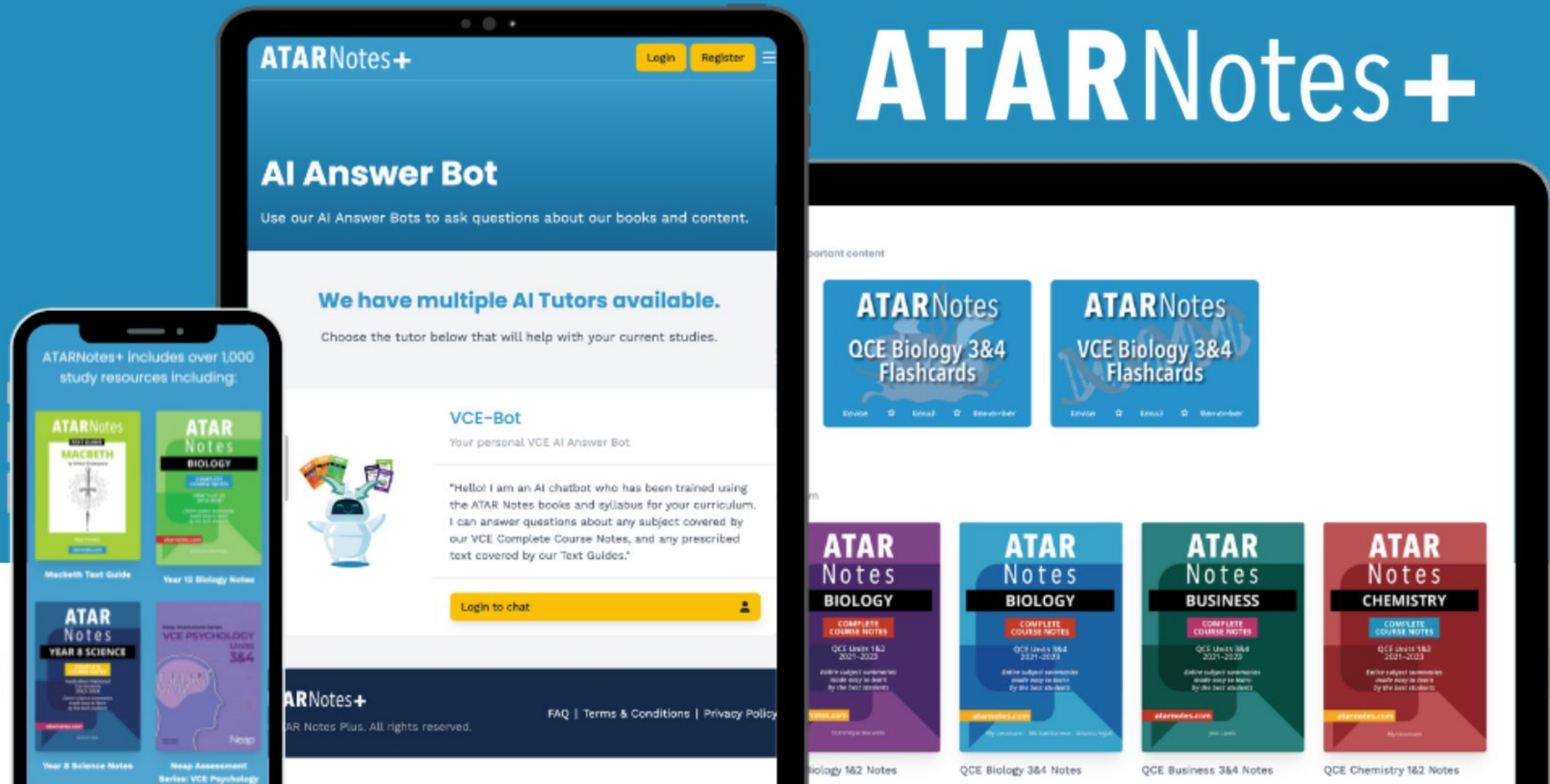
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How to get a 95+ ATAR

ATARNotes January Lecture Series

Presented by:
Maddie Pryde

- Introduction + Warm Up
- Planning Well
- Getting ahead of the curve
- Good quality study
- Getting the most from assessment
- Balance



Overview

A bit about me!

- Hi, I'm Maddie!
- I graduated from BGGs in 2020 with an ATAR of 97.65
- Favourite subjects in school were English, Literature and Modern History
- I'm studying a double degree in Communications and Arts at UQ
 - Majoring in International Relations / Peace & Conflict
- I've been tutoring and lecturing high school students for the past 3 years
- I love terrible movies (and reviewing them) and excellent bagels



Take a moment to break down your big goal (95+ ATAR) into smaller ones. How are you going to tackle doing well in each of your subjects, how are you going to ensure each assignment and exam is done to the best of your ability? How are you going to stay on top on study alongside other commitments?



The first step in working towards a good final score is to understand that getting it is more complicated than simply scoring well in a collection of assessments. Year 12 (and 11) is immensely complicated for a whole host of reasons, which is why it's important to set goals beyond a simple number!



Welcome to the final stretch that is Senior English! It can be a bit intimidating entering the big leagues (Year 12), so let's take the time to remind yourself just HOW ready you are for what's to come. In Queensland, English is a compulsory subject, which means you've completed;

- Prep-Year 10 English Classes
- 'Practise' Year of Assessments
- Dozens of books read
- Hundreds of Poems analysed
- Countless speeches given
- A hundred stories written
- Millions of words read, analysed and written



I'm sure many of you are thinking:
“Ok that's great Maddie. But I don't care about what I've done, I care about what I HAVE TO DO.”

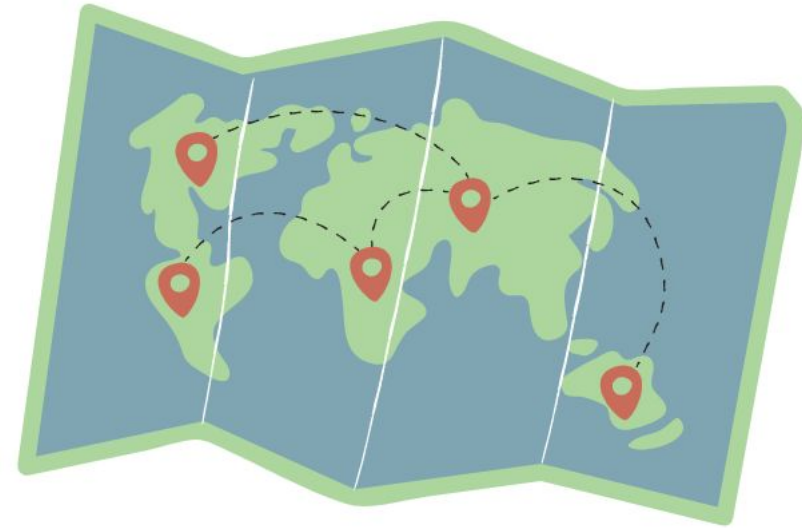
A brief note on mindset:

- You are about to take on something stressful, tiring and just plain hard
- You need to be thinking about how to keep your brain in a good place!
- This will allow you to do better :)

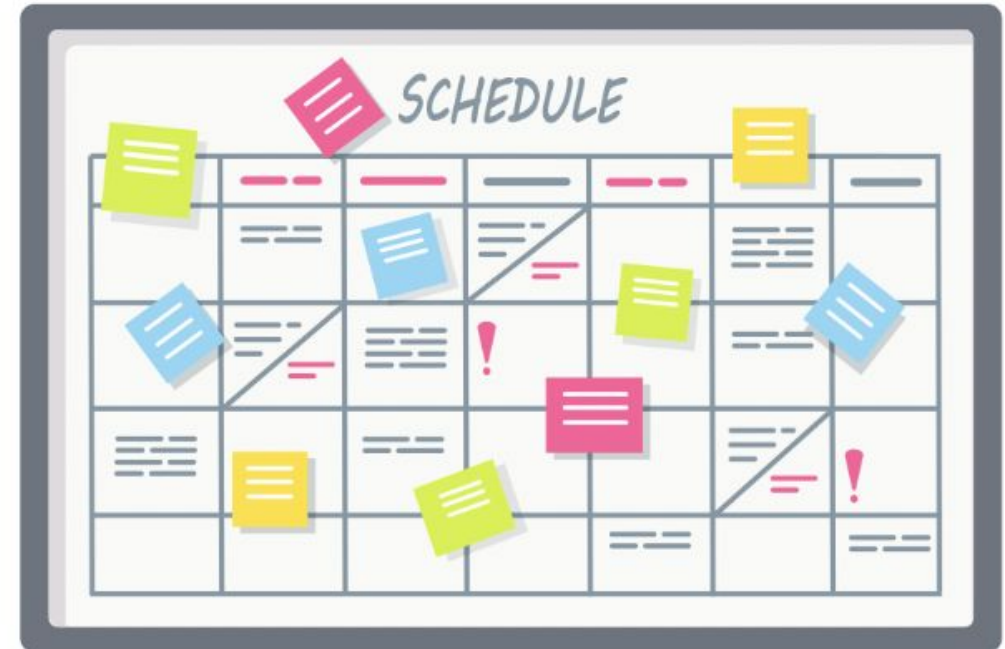


The roadmap of Units 1&2:

- 4 assessments
 - IA1: ESSAY FOR THE PUBLIC AUDIENCE
 - IA2: PERSUASIVE ORAL
 - IA3: CREATIVE RESPONSE TO A WRITTEN TEXT
 - EA1: ANALYTICAL ESSAY
- Weighting is equal across the 4 (25% each)



- When the year gets crazy it can be hard to rise to the occasion - instead we can only hope we can fall back on the habits we have made
- This means that planning well for the term ahead is VITAL



- Invest some time in putting together a solid planner. This could be a physical book or a digital one.
- Your planner should include all of your deadlines and due dates, co-curricular activities, social events, school events etc
- It should also include set study times in your week. This means that you can schedule non school related things around it, while still getting consistent study in!
- You should also use your planner to keep yourself productive with big assessment pieces by adding in 'dummy' deadlines or checkpoints.



- To the best of your ability, your planner should be neat and organised. The easiest way to do this is by colour coordination. Perhaps different colours for different subjects, or different colours for different activities (school, social, work etc)
- Your planner should also be the yardstick by which you determine if you are balancing your time appropriately. (More on this later!)



- Planning shouldn't be confined to the long term, you also need to be in the habit of planning your individual study sessions also.
- Break them down into smaller tasks for your subjects and be *specific*
- Productivity occurs best when you have a solid plan of what you want to achieve, and a little serotonin boost from ticking things off a to-do list certainly doesn't hurt



The name of the game in Senior is working

Smarter not harder

During the height of assessment/exam season in term, you will feel overwhelmed and stressed, which means the more work you can do outside of these 'hot zones' the easier they will be.



Working ***smarter not harder*** could look like;

- Reading your english novel over the holidays
- Having set revision sessions for maths/science topics at the start of every week
- Making flashcards or study resources as you learn content
- Have a study group that helps each other review
- Writing notes in class that will help you when it comes time to study



- When you hand work or get get marks back on an assignment, it can be tempting to never want to think about it again.
- You need to be able to use your marks and feedback to your advantage, to know exactly how to improve moving forward. If you're in Grade 11 this could be assessment specific details, if you are Grade 12 this could be writing or exam skills that will aid you in assessments on the horizon (and even into future study)



- Your teachers are an amazing resource, and will appreciate you taking initiative in reaching out to them for real tailored feedback
 - *How do you recommend I study for this topic?*
 - *What criteria do I need to focus on the most?*
 - *What specific skills do I need to improve?*
 - *In your written feedback you said _____, can you explain that a little more?*
 - *How can I demonstrate skill/understanding the best?*
 - *Can you explain how I can prevent making this mistake again?*
 - *Can we walk through this section of the assignment/exam together?*



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Creative Response (IA3)

When it comes to getting a solid final score, lots of students think that the only way to do this is to work until they drop. More hours = better grades.

This is not the case.

Getting good grades comes when you prioritise quality over quantity.

But what does that look like?



The first step is having a productive study space that will minimise distractions and maximise focus:

- **Work in a tidy space, away from technology and loud social areas. Make this place your designated study space!**
- **Make an achievable to-do list of tasks to complete in your study session - once you are in a productivity groove, your brain won't jump at chances to be distracted**
- **Use ambient noise or music to block out any conversations happening around you**
- **Set your phone to Do Not Disturb to keep notifications off your screen and far from your mind**
- **Remember to schedule breaks for yourself! Do something physical in these breaks to burn off extra energy**



- Active study is a avenue to ensure that your study consists of more than simply reading study notes over and over and hoping they stick.
- For this, flashcards are your friend! Although it's important to get them right to ensure they work for you :D
 - No need to write lengthy paragraphs! Break down big concepts into bite size pieces that will fit easily on a single card. Utilise keywords and diagrams to simplify complex ideas. If you make concepts easy to review, they will be easy to remember.



- If your flashcards are all identical you won't want to pick them up to study, and you your brain will struggle to remember specific details. Use diagrams, colour coordination, word association, funky fonts or whatever you can to make them interesting!
- On one side of the flashcard write questions or incomplete statements, then the answers on the other. Keep score of what you're remembering to note what concepts you need to review more closely, and challenge yourself to get better with each walk through!



- Mix up each study session to focus on different areas. Focus the most on the concepts you struggle the most with, but remember to be cycling through everything you need to know so you don't forget easy ideas.



- Related to the myth surrounding sheer number of hours needed to make good grades, is the idea that to maintain focus one needs to sit down and work for hours upon end. Or students simply forget to take breaks and binge study until they lose all brain function.
- Study breaks are **IMPORTANT**, and this is how to get a gage on when to take one;
 - Study for 20 mins, rest for 3
 - Study for 30 mins, rest for 5
 - Study for 45 mins, rest for 10
 - Study for 1 hour, rest for 20 mins
 - Study of 1 hour 30, rest for 45 mins
 - Study for 1 hours 45, rest for 50 mins
 - Study for 2 hours, rest for 1 hour



- Ok, so you need to take study breaks...how do you take a good one?
 - **If you realise you've been studying for hours:**
 - Eat and refuel your body, refill your water bottle with cold water, watch/listen to something lighthearted before returning to study
 - **If you're feeling stressed out:**
 - Take a moment to re-centre away from your desk/study materials, laptop. If you can go outside where you can feel fresh air and the sun.
 - **If you can't seem to focus:**
 - Get up from your desk and move. Run through some quick stretches, take the dog for a quick walk, go for a run, put on some music and dance around in circles - just hop up from your chair!
 - **If you're mentally and physically exhausted:**
 - Set a timer for 25-30 minutes and take a nap. Any longer and your brain will complete a REM cycle, meaning you are more tired when you wake up.
 - **If you're bored by the content**
 - Switch up the learning style! Search for videos or podcasts, draw out concepts by hand, grab some flashcards and a friend and work through concepts, work through some practise questions.

Study breaks are really important. They ensure that when we are working our brains work at their peak. This means we retain more information and are more likely to exhibit strong problem solving and critical thinking skills!



Often, students feel the jump between regular study and walking into a room for the external exam. To bridge that gap, study in exam conditions should be something you partake in throughout the term, leading up to the exam itself!

- Have a clock/timer to mimic the experience of being in an exam room, under the same time pressures
- Have a collection of practice questions to complete, the same types you would encounter in an exam
- Have some blank paper for any planning or extra work space you need
- The only tech on your desk should be the kind allowed in an exam room, like your calculator.
- Keep your phone away from your space to avoid distractions and to keep you in the zone



- An underrated technique to getting the most out of study is to work with your friends!
- How do you work effectively together?
 - **GOALS:** Have expectations of what you would like to get done during the session. These could be decided at the end of the previous session to avoid wasting time at the start of the next one.
 - **CONSISTENCY:** Try and study with the same people often. Once a week/fortnight, for 1-3 hours (with breaks!)
 - **LIMIT NUMBERS:** Have 4-6 members, as larger groups tend to lose focus easily
 - **REVIEW:** At the end of each session, review the key content you learnt!
 - **LOCATION:** Find a space where distractions are minimal, and conversation won't annoy others in the vicinity
 - **TECHNOLOGY:** Use zoom and facetime to keep the group meeting even when it becomes difficult to schedule meeting in person!



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Analytical Essay (IA4)

As I've alluded to a few times throughout this presentation, balance is a vital element in doing well. If you dedicate your entire life, your entire self to study, you will not succeed as you might hope to. A good score requires good mental health, a positive mindset and more and than anything, belief that you can achieve what you have set out to.

Balance means you need your week to include activities outside of school, including a day in the week where you do not study at all. Be sure to devote time to things you enjoy, things that make you happy.

⚠ Remember, 30 mins before the exam, you've done everything you can to prepare ⚠ - Breathe, check you have all the correct tools, and look forward to being done!

Eat breakfast, even if you're feeling the nerves and not very hungry. It is super important your brain has the fuel it needs to solve problems and write essays. Be sure to fill out all the details on the front of your exam very carefully. The last thing you want is to lose any marks (or not have it marked at all!) because you forgot to write your name or you forgot to indicate which essay question you were answering!



If you're writing an essay in exam conditions, use planning time to;

Write out a thesis/argument

Decide your key points/paragraphs

Write down all the evidence you are going to use
(this is especially important if your evidence is memorised, we want to free up brain space to write during the actual exam time!)



If you're tackling an exam, use planning time to ;
Carefully read through all the questions on the paper

Note how many questions the paper contains
(check all the pages front and back to ensure you have them all!)

Have a plan of attack on what order you will complete the exam (Bust through multi-choice? Take on the hardest question? Answer the easiest first?)



During the exam;
Even if you read the questions during planning time, read them **AGAIN** and read them **CAREFULLY**. You want to be sure what the question is asking you before you put in a bunch of time and effort into answering it. Perhaps spend some time highlighting the key information in the question!



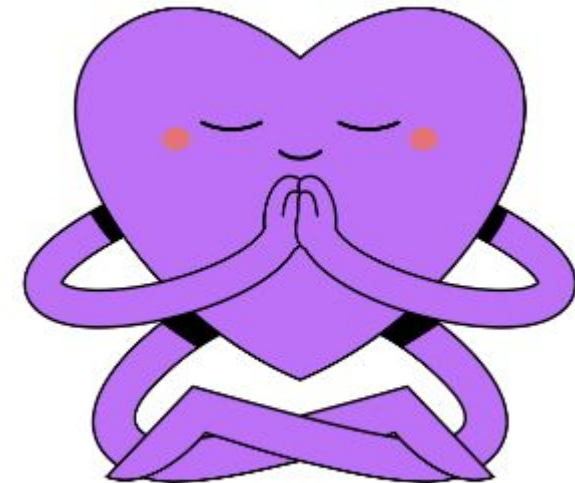
During the exam;
If you don't know how to answer a question, or you're halfway through and don't know how to precede, don't panic. Move onto another question, and return later with fresher eyes. This goes for essays in exam conditions too! Leave some blank lines and write another section of the essay until you can return later.



During the exam;
If you have time at the end of the exam, go back over ALL your work and check it carefully. Make sure you have the details in your working that the questions asks for (have you rounded to the correct number of decimal places?), you start all your paragraphs with a topic sentence and that all the basic spelling and grammar is **FLAWLESS**. There is nothing more frustrating than losing marks over silly details.



During the exam;
If you are feeling stuck, panicked or overwhelmed, take a moment to pause and breathe. Put the pen down, close your eyes and take a steady slow breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Taking a minute to calm your mind is NOT time wasted.



Thank You!

Thank you so much for joining me. I hope you have learnt one or two skills that will set you on a confident path into Year 11. I am rooting for you all, I hope you enjoy every last moment and make the most of your year! For some of you I will see you soon at Tutesmart. For those I won't see, I wish you all the very best. Remember you are never defined by that pesky number at the end of next year.

Thank you everyone!